



SEAPORT

NORTH CENTRAL IDAHO: CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS, & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

In February, Seaport's *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* increased by 100 from January 2003—to 26,760 from 26,660. From February 2002, the increase was 120. February's increase, though slight, was still welcome even though the boost in February was less than the increase a year ago. *Education* posted a significant job increase (260), though that is normal because school personnel are returning to classrooms after the Christmas break. *Other Manufacturing*, which increased significantly in February, was a bright spot. Manufacturing jobs outside of the traditional lumber and paper manufacturing sectors continue to grow. Besides *Education* and *Other Manufacturing*, however, employment in all other industries showed decreases.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Idaho & Lewis County

- Officials at Bennett Forest Industries are considering moving their Elk City and Grangeville mills to the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley. The company cites high transportation costs, low lumber prices, and a sharp decline in trees being harvested on the Nez Perce National Forest as reasons for the potential move. "At this point in time, we're evaluating the future of the business and its locations," confirmed John Bennett, president of Bennett Forest Industries. Moving would provide the company better access to rail lines, qualified workers and logs, Bennett said. A move to the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley would result in the closure of the Grangeville and Elk City sites, which employ about 110 people, although moving to the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley is only one of the possibilities under consideration. "Staying right here is one of the options," Bennett said. He declined to elaborate on any other plans. According to Bennett, the more generous timber harvests on

Seaport Table 1: Labor Force & Employment
Nez Perce County, Idaho and Asotin County, Washington

	Feb 2003*	Jan 2003	Feb 2002	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	36,190	35,050	34,820	3.3	3.9
Unemployment	1,340	1,390	1,590	-3.6	-15.7
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.7	4.0	4.6		
Total Employment	34,850	33,660	33,230	3.5	4.9
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	36,280	35,160	34,970	3.2	3.7
Unemployment	1,730	1,790	2,050	-3.4	-15.6
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.8	5.1	5.9		
Total Employment	34,550	33,370	32,920	3.5	5.0
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS	26,760	26,660	26,640	0.4	0.5
Goods-Producing Industries	4,390	4,410	4,230	-0.5	3.8
Natural Resources & Mining	230	250	200	-8.0	15.0
Construction	910	900	930	1.1	-2.2
Manufacturing	3,250	3,260	3,100	-0.3	4.8
Wood Product Manufacturing	560	570	560	-1.8	0.0
Food Manufacturing	90	110	90	-18.2	0.0
Paper Manufacturing	1,210	1,210	1,200	0.0	0.8
Other Manufacturing	1,390	1,380	1,250	0.7	11.2
Service-Producing Industries	22,370	22,250	22,410	0.5	-0.2
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	5,890	5,990	5,860	-1.7	0.5
Wholesale Trade	620	650	620	-4.6	0.0
Retail Trade	3,980	4,040	3,940	-1.5	1.0
Utilities	80	90	90	-11.1	-11.1
Transportation & Warehousing	1,210	1,210	1,210	0.0	0.0
Information	360	360	370	0.0	-2.7
Financial Activities	1,810	1,830	1,790	-1.1	1.1
Professional & Business Services	1,530	1,530	1,490	0.0	2.7
Leisure & Hospitality	3,800	3,830	3,980	-0.8	-4.5
Education & Health Services	2,570	2,580	2,570	-0.4	0.0
Other Services	1,190	1,190	1,180	0.0	0.8
Government Education	2,480	2,220	2,500	11.7	-0.8
Government Administration	1,850	1,850	1,840	0.0	0.5
Government Tribes	890	870	830	2.3	7.2

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

the Clearwater and Umatilla National Forests and Idaho state lands could feed a Lewiston-Clarkston Valley mill. In the early 1990s, between 60 and 70 million board feet a year were produced from the Nez Perce National Forest compared with about 15 million board feet a year today, and prices have climbed between 25 and 30 percent, according to Bennett. He said his operations need 35 million board feet a year to run at a healthy level. If the Nez Perce National Forest offered more timber sales, it would be more likely Bennett Forest Industries could stay, Bennett said.

- Nearly one quarter of a million dollars in federal, state, and local funding has been granted toward general maintenance improve-

ments scheduled for this summer at the Idaho County Airport. Funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), administered through the Idaho Division of Aeronautics, will pay for resurfacing, which will include crack repair and seal coating of the approximately 5,100-foot-long, 75-foot-wide runway. Depending on the cost of the bids, additional work could be conducted to widen the connecting taxiways, which would add additional operating service for larger aircraft.

Clearwater

- The only emergency room in the 112-mile span between Lewiston, Idaho, and Missoula, Montana, received a boost when the U.S. Congress passed the Omnibus Appropriations Act in February. The bill included \$500,000 for Orofino's Clearwater Valley Hospital, which plans to expand the Emergency Room (ER) with the funds. Senator Mike Crapo was instrumental in acquiring funding for the hospital. "We were working on a series of projects, and this one was my office's highest priority," said Sen. Crapo. The Clearwater Valley Hospital submitted an appropriations request through Senator Crapo's office two years ago, then again one year ago. The new ER will provide two additional ER bays to supplement the current single bay, plus interior renovations that will increase the number of ER beds from two to four.
- The FAA awarded Orofino \$150,000 in fiscal year 2003 for improvements to the Orofino Airport instead of the expected \$79,000. Over the last three years, the FAA has awarded \$308,000 in grants to the Orofino Airport.

Latah County

- Troutman's Emporium, a Eugene-based clothing store, is closing its 34 stores in five states and liquidating assets to settle \$30 million in debts. The firm, founded by Dallas Troutman nearly 48 years ago, was unable to find a buyer or secure new financing, according to documents filed in U.S. Bankruptcy Court. Emporium employs 1,600 people in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, and California. The Moscow store is its only location in north central Idaho and southeastern Washington.
- University of Idaho (UI) researchers will use a NASA grant of nearly \$1 million to develop ultra-low-power computer chips for use in space. It's another coup for UI professor Gary Maki, whose work in space electronics has led to more than \$27 million in government contracts over two decades. The low-voltage chips are designed to cut power usage by factors of 10 to 100. In two years NASA

will try out the chips on a test mission. Engineers at NASA believe the chips could lead to smaller, cheaper satellites by reducing the size of solar panels and batteries on board the craft.

- UI researchers also received two grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The new grants will allow scientists to study methods to improve efficiency in beef cattle and to develop the next generation of wood composite building materials. A \$170,000 grant will be used to conduct research into using wood composite to improve the performance of wood-plastic composites. A \$166,723 grant will be used to research the role of the hormone leptin in beef cattle.

Nez Perce and Asotin (WA) Counties

- Regence BlueShield of Idaho announced in February that they are delaying plans to construct what will be one of Lewiston's largest office buildings at the city's business and Technology Park. The project, which had been scheduled to be finished this year, will not open until late summer of 2005. The economic downturn is the reason for the change of plans. Regence, which employs about 550 people in Lewiston, has paid out more money in benefits than it has received in premiums for the last three years. Income from stocks and bonds has helped the company fill the gap, but in recent months those investments didn't perform as well as they had in the past. David Doeringsfeld, manager of the Port of Lewiston, said the news was not entirely unexpected. "We're disappointed, but we understand the economic decisions that influenced Regence's decision," he said. The port owns the land Regence will use and plans to give it to Regence in exchange for the 100 to 150 new jobs that will be created. Aside from the delay, Regence officials say the plans for the building remain mostly unchanged. It will be about 55,000-square feet, just slightly smaller than previously announced. Regence will move 350 people from its Bryden Avenue office to the new building. Regence's plans are also significant because many hope it will be the anchor tenant in the 41-acre business and technology park. Regence will occupy six acres, leaving room for at least seven more tenants of the same size.

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